



---

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
Adult Services

# South Carolina Department of Social Services

**Adult Protective Services**

**Policy Manual**

**Disaster & Emergency**

**Preparedness**

**South Carolina Department of Social Services  
Adult Protective Services Policy and Procedure Manual**

**APS Program Policy– Disaster & Emergency Preparedness**

Revision Number: 21-01 Effective Date: 04/21/2021

---

## **APS Program Policy: Disaster & Emergency Preparedness**

### **Table of Contents**

<a href="#">100</a>	Purpose and Scope of Program
<a href="#">110</a>	Definitions
<a href="#">120</a>	General Provisions
<a href="#">130</a>	State Of Emergency for South Carolina
<a href="#">131</a>	APS State Program Staff
<a href="#">132</a>	Responsibilities of APS County Staff
<a href="#">140</a>	Actions to Take on High Risk Clients during Severe Weather or Natural Disaster Watch
<a href="#">150</a>	Establishing Communication for Severe Weather
<a href="#">160</a>	Resources
<a href="#">170</a>	State Emergency Management Team
<a href="#">180</a>	Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale
<a href="#">181</a>	Fujita-Pearson Tornado Scale

Referenced Documents

**South Carolina Department of Social Services  
Adult Protective Services Policy and Procedure Manual**

**APS Program Policy– Disaster & Emergency Preparedness**

**APS Program Policy: Disaster & Emergency Preparedness**

**100 PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF PROGRAM**

**PURPOSE.** The purpose of this chapter is to provide guidance and direction for vulnerable adults in the care and custody of the agency and APS staff during severe weather, natural disasters and other emergency situations.

**INTENT.** It is the intent of the Adult Protective Services Program to promote the safety and well-being of vulnerable adults during severe weather, natural disasters and emergency situations.

**SCOPE OF DISASTER & EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS.** The scope of Disaster & Emergency Preparedness includes the process and procedures to follow during severe weather, natural disasters and other emergency situations.

The Adult Protective Services Program has developed the following APS Disaster & Emergency Preparedness Plan in an attempt to ensure the safety and well-being of vulnerable adults in agency custody and other high risk clients in agency care. It is important that this plan is followed and communications remain open between the local APS staff and the APS Area managers during times of severe weather, natural disasters and other emergency situations. It is the responsibility of each county office to maintain and update the APS Disaster & Emergency Preparedness Plan as changes occur.

This plan has precise procedures and guidelines for staff to follow to ensure the safety of vulnerable adults in the event the APS Disaster & Emergency Preparedness Plan needs to be activated. Local DSS offices are directed to coordinate with local state agencies, nonprofits, religious organizations, local governments, hospitals and clinics and transportation providers in order to enhance the provision of services during the course of a disaster and/or an emergency. Roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined.

The APS Disaster & Emergency Preparedness Plan addresses the procedures and guidelines for promoting the safety and well-being of clients in DSS care and custody who are high risk clients.

**110 DEFINITIONS**

The following terms and definitions are commonly used in a state of emergency, during severe weather and other natural disasters:

**1. Severe Weather**

This phrase is generally used to describe any destructive weather event. However, it mostly applies to localized storms, such as severe thunderstorms i.e., damaging wind, large hail, tornadoes, and hurricanes.

**2. Watch**

An official statement issued by the National Weather Service (NWS), meaning that a hazardous weather-related event is possible in the near future. Watches are issued for significant winter storms, flash floods, severe thunderstorms, tornadoes, high winds, hurricanes, etc. Winter storms and hurricane watches are typically posted 12-36 hours ahead of the storms expected arrival, while severe thunderstorm, tornado, and flash flood/flood watches may be issued only a few hours or less in advance. In general, watches are issued before a warning. The only exceptions are in flash floods, severe thunderstorms, and tornadoes—if these events are isolated a watch will not be issued, but just a warning. Otherwise, a watch will be issued.

**South Carolina Department of Social Services  
Adult Protective Services Policy and Procedure Manual**

**APS Program Policy– Disaster & Emergency Preparedness**

### **3. Warning**

An official statement issued by NWS offices, meaning that a hazardous weather-related event is imminent or already occurring. A warning means that there is a serious threat to life and property. Warnings are issued for significant winter storms, flash floods, severe thunderstorms, tornadoes, high winds, hurricanes, etc.

## **120 GENERAL PROVISIONS**

1. The Disaster & Emergency Preparedness Plan should be given to each current Adult Protective Services staff member and reviewed in full.
2. Staff will keep the Disaster & Emergency Preparedness Plan in a place that is easily accessible in their office.
3. Each new employee should receive a copy of the plan from his/her supervisor and should review it with the supervisor within the first week of employment.
4. The case record of custody and high risk clients in agency care should be marked and easily identified by all APS staff.
5. APS supervisors need to periodically review the Disaster & Emergency Preparedness Plan with their staff, especially during severe weather seasons.
6. Communication and preparedness are essential to making things run as smoothly as possible during severe weather, natural disasters and states of emergencies. Each APS county office is responsible for maintaining and making changes to the Disaster Preparedness Plan as the need for revisions arises. Any changes made to duties or obligations of the county office staff in the local Disaster & Emergency Preparedness Plan must first receive approval from the Adult Advocacy Division at the State Office.
7. Each county APS office will include in their Disaster & Emergency Preparedness Plan provisions for protecting computers and files from flooding and other possible damage or destruction during severe weather or natural disaster.

## **130 STATE OF EMERGENCY FOR SOUTH CAROLINA**

When the President or Governor declares a State of Emergency for South Carolina, the following policies will be in effect for the Adult Protective Services Program.

### **Section I. County Office Staff Procedures**

1. Case managers and supervisors are responsible for knowing what their clients plan is and where they will be located during the hurricane.
2. Case managers will communicate information about their clients, their client's plan, and their client's location to their regional APS Area Manager upon request.
3. Case managers will communicate information to their Area Manager on **all** APS clients (those who are in an evacuation zone and those who are not in an evacuation zone) to include:
  - Number of open APS cases by county;
  - Number of clients in DSS custody by county;
  - Number of APS clients with sitters by county;
  - Number of clients in nursing homes/residential care facilities by county.
4. When an evacuation is ordered, case managers will follow the procedures outlined below for clients in the evacuation zone(s).

#### **A. Clients with Sitters**

**South Carolina Department of Social Services  
Adult Protective Services Policy and Procedure Manual**

**APS Program Policy– Disaster & Emergency Preparedness**

- i.. If a client with a sitter is in an evacuation zone, coordinate with the state office to make arrangements to move that client and the sitter to a designated special needs shelter in the area or a motel in a safe area.
- ii. If you need assistance with finding a hotel or getting transportation for your client, contact your Area Manager.
- iii. Communicate information to your Area Manager to include:
  - Client’s Name;
  - Sitter Service;
  - Sitter’s Name;
  - Current Location;
  - Relocation Site and Address;
  - Date of Relocation;
  - Mode of Transportation for Relocation.
- iv. Document in CAPSS where the client is being relocated, how they are being transported, and all other relevant information regarding their relocation.
- v. Once the evacuation order is lifted and conditions are safe for the client to return home, coordinate with the state office to make arrangements to move that client and the sitter back home.
- vi. Communicate information to your Area Manager to include:
  - Client’s Name;
  - Sitter Service;
  - Sitter’s Name;
  - Date of Move Home;
  - Mode of Transportation for Relocation.
- vii. Document in CAPSS when the client is moved back home, how they were transported, and any other relevant information about their move back home.

**B. Clients Who Have Dementia with Sitters**

- i. Make arrangements to transport clients who have dementia and are in an evacuation zone along with their sitter to the closest DHEC Special Needs Shelter or a motel in a safe area (see “Clients with Sitters” section of this plan if evacuating to a motel). You can call your County Emergency Management Office to find out where the shelter is.
- ii. The client will need to take the following to the Special Needs Shelter (This information comes from DHEC’s Special Needs Shelter brochure):
  - Enough medications for 7 days. Bring all prescription medication in the original containers even if the supply is low.

**South Carolina Department of Social Services  
Adult Protective Services Policy and Procedure Manual**

**APS Program Policy– Disaster & Emergency Preparedness**

- Enough medical supplies for 7 days. These are items that the client uses on a daily basis such as glucometers, syringes, dressings and bandages.
  - Medical equipment used at home such as wheelchairs, canes or walkers, hearing aids, and eyeglasses.
  - Breathing devices including oxygen concentrators, extra tanks or canisters.
  - Personal items like a toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, diapers and clothing.
- iii. Contact your APS Area Manager if you need help securing transportation.
- iv. Communicate information to your Area Manager to include:
- Client's Name;
  - Sitter Service;
  - Sitter's Name;
  - Current Location;
  - Date of Relocation;
  - Relocation Site and Address;
  - Mode of Transportation for Relocation.
- v. Document in CAPSS where the client is being relocated, how they are being transported, and all other relevant information regarding their relocation.
- vi. Once the evacuation order is lifted and conditions are safe for the client to return home, coordinate with the state office to make arrangements to move that client and the sitter back home.
- vii. Communicate information to your Area Manager to include:
- Client's Name;
  - Sitter Service;
  - Sitter's Name;
  - Date of Move Home;
  - Mode of Transportation for Relocation.
- viii. Document in CAPSS when the client is moved back home, how they were transported, and any other relevant information about their move back home.

**C. Clients in Nursing Homes/Residential Care Facilities**

- i. Clients in nursing homes and residential care facilities that are in an evacuation zone will follow the facility's emergency/evacuation plan.
- ii. Call the facility and find out what their evacuation/emergency plan is.
- iii. Communicate information to your Area Manager to include:
- Client's Name;
  - Facility Name;
  - Current Location;

**South Carolina Department of Social Services  
Adult Protective Services Policy and Procedure Manual**

**APS Program Policy– Disaster & Emergency Preparedness**

- Facility Emergency/Evacuation Plan;
  - Date of Relocation;
  - Relocation Site and Address;
  - Mode of Transportation for Relocation.
- iv. Document in CAPSS for these clients what the facility's evacuation/emergency plan is and where the clients will be relocated.
- v. Once the evacuation order is lifted and conditions are safe for the client to return to the facility, call the facility to find out when the clients will be moved back to the facility.
- vi. Communicate information to your Area Manager to include:
- Client's Name;
  - Facility Name;
  - Date of Move Back to Facility;
  - Mode of Transportation for Relocation.
- vii. Document in CAPSS when the client is being moved back to the facility, how they are being transported, and any other relevant information about their move back to the facility.

**D. Medically Fragile Clients in Their Homes**

- i. Find out what medically fragile clients in evacuation zones plan to do. If family or friends are coming to get them, contact family members or friends to confirm and document in CAPSS where the client is being relocated and with whom, how they are being transported, and all other relevant information regarding their relocation.
- ii. If they don't have an evacuation plan, make arrangements to transport them to the closest DHEC Special Needs Shelter. You can call your County Emergency Management Office to find out where the shelter is.
- iii. The client will need to take the following to the Special Needs Shelter (This information comes from DHEC's Special Needs Shelter brochure):
- Enough medications for 7 days. Bring all prescription medication in the original containers even if the supply is low.
  - Enough medical supplies for 7 days. These are items that the client uses on a daily basis such as glucometers, syringes, dressings and bandages.
  - Medical equipment used at home such as wheelchairs, canes or walkers, hearing aids, and eyeglasses.
  - Breathing devices including oxygen concentrators, extra tanks or canisters.
  - Personal items like a toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, diapers and clothing.
- iv. Contact your APS Area Manager if you need help securing transportation.
- v. Communicate information to your APS Area Manager to include:

**South Carolina Department of Social Services  
Adult Protective Services Policy and Procedure Manual**

**APS Program Policy– Disaster & Emergency Preparedness**

- Client's Name;
  - Current Location;
  - Date of Relocation;
  - Relocation Site and Address;
  - Mode of Transportation for Relocation.
- vi. Document in CAPSS where the client is being relocated, how they are being transported, and all other relevant information regarding their relocation.
- vii. Once the evacuation order is lifted and conditions are safe for the client to return home, coordinate with the state office to make arrangements to move that client back home.
- viii. Communicate information to your APS Area Manager to include:
- Client's Name;
  - Date of Move Home;
  - Mode of Transportation for Relocation.

**Section II. State Office Procedures**

1. APS state office will assist with finding motel rooms in safe areas, securing transportation services for those who need it, and setting up relief for the sitters with sitter providers.
2. APS state office will coordinate with sitter providers to assist with the evacuation of APS clients as needed.
3. APS Area Managers will collect information on all APS clients by county from case managers to include:
  - Number of open APS cases by county;
  - Number of clients in DSS custody by county;
  - Number of APS clients with sitters by county;
  - Number of clients in nursing homes/residential care facilities by county.
4. APS performances coaches will collect information from case managers on clients who are being evacuated from their homes, nursing homes, or residential care facilities as outlined in this plan.
5. Performances Coaches will provide all collected information to the designated state office staff member who will keep the information in a document that can be provided to the governor's office and/or the DSS director upon request.
6. Once the evacuation order is lifted and conditions are safe for the client to return home, APS performances coaches will collect information from case managers on clients who are being returned to their homes, nursing homes, or residential care facilities as outlined in this plan.
7. Performances coaches will provide all collected information about client's returning home to the designated state office staff member who will keep the information in a document that can be provided to the governor's office and/or the DSS state director's office upon request.

**South Carolina Department of Social Services  
Adult Protective Services Policy and Procedure Manual**

**APS Program Policy– Disaster & Emergency Preparedness**

**Implement Disaster Response (At OPCON 1, 2, or 3)**

1. Review personal and office safety plans.
2. Become familiar with local evacuation zones in coastal counties.
3. Locate the nearest hurricane evacuation routes.
4. Locate the nearest special needs shelter(s).
5. Develop a plan to get clients with sitters to the closest special needs shelter.

If APS is alerted to the possibility of an impending disaster, staff in affected areas should follow these procedures before leaving the office.

1. Backup and print key files. Staff should identify their own critical files and back them up on the H drive, a flash drive, and/or print out key documents on a regular basis. *Files that have been printed out or saved on flash drives should be taken with you to make sure they are safe.*
2. Logout. Follow normal logoff/signoff procedures for computer systems.
3. Power Down. Properly power down all computer related equipment including workstations, monitors and printers.
4. Unplug Equipment. Unplug power cords of computers, monitors and printers from the wall. *Don't unplug telephone or data network cables unless equipment must be moved (see below).* If these cables must be disconnected, unplug the “equipment end” rather than the “wall-jack end” of the cable.
5. Move Equipment. Move equipment away from windows and off the floor to avoid possible water damage.
6. Cover Equipment. Cover computer equipment securely with plastic sheeting after power- down. Plastic trash bags can be used as an option.
7. Create and distribute staff emergency contact lists including cell numbers.
8. Lock up confidential files. (In case of looting).
9. Put up hurricane shutters/plywood if possible. If time, manpower, and resources allow, put up plywood or other protective materials over windows and glass doors.
10. Lock up confidential files, pack up paper files, and store files high above the floor.

**132 RESPONSIBILITIES OF APS COUNTY STAFF**

1. The Placement Screen in CAPSS must be completed on all clients in placement prior to an emergency, severe weather or natural disaster.
2. Each case manager will provide the names and contact information of the APS client to their supervisor along with a brief explanation for designating the client as “high risk.” When a client is in DSS custody, an emergency contact information plan should be completed.
3. The supervisor and/or county director are responsible for developing and maintaining a master list of high risk clients within their given area.
4. As new cases are acquired by the case manager, they should immediately be added to the master list for that area. The case manager should consider removal of obese clients and discuss plans for evacuation and make it a part of planning for services.
5. Custody cases should be included even though these clients are considered to be in protective environments. The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) has an Emergency Evacuation Plan Component for Nursing Homes, Hospitals and Community Residential Facilities.

**South Carolina Department of Social Services  
Adult Protective Services Policy and Procedure Manual**

**APS Program Policy– Disaster & Emergency Preparedness**

**140 ACTIONS TO TAKE ON “HIGH RISK CLIENTS” DURING SEVERE WEATHER OR NATURAL DISASTER WATCH**

APS staff will make contact (by phone or home visit) and assess safety and well-being of each high risk client. Resident administrators should be contacted to make sure the emergency plan contact information (including alternate contact) in the event of any medical emergency or relocation of client is correct. Case managers should make sure arrangements for medication refills and other special needs like oxygen are in place for the client.

1. The APS staff will attempt to ensure that each high risk client is aware of evacuation procedures for his/her county and the location of local shelters. Facility administrators should be reminded of DHEC's emergency evacuation plan.
2. The APS staff will attempt to ensure that high risk clients have access to emergency supplies (first aid kits, flashlights, radios, batteries, etc.). The local Red Cross should be contacted regarding availability of emergency kits. If there are no kits available, the Red Cross should be asked to provide information to the county director/supervisor as to how to obtain these supplies in advance so that they are readily available to the client.
3. The APS staff will ensure each high risk client has telephone numbers for police, hospitals, neighbors, friends, family or any other resources that are able and willing to assist in meeting needs during times of severe weather or natural disaster.
4. After other resources (law enforcement, etc) have been explored, APS staff may be required to provide and/or arrange transportation for high risk clients to shelters. This will need to be done during the early stages of a severe weather watch as it is not expected that staff put themselves or others in danger while severe weather is occurring.
5. Following the end of severe weather/natural disaster, APS staff will follow up with the high risk client and/or facilities to assess the client's safety and see if there are any immediate needs that should be addressed.

**150 ESTABLISHING COMMUNICATION FOR SEVERE WEATHER**

Establish a chain of command for each county and ensure each staff member has an understanding of his/her role.

There must be a clear line of authority so that communications run smoothly during events of severe weather. Once the county director becomes aware of the threat or disaster then he/she should contact appropriate staff to inform them that the local disaster preparedness plan is in effect. The chain of command should be as follows:

1. State Director;
2. Deputy State Director;
3. County Director;
4. Program Supervisor;
5. APS Case Managers;

Attach a list of team members with both work and after-hour phone numbers (cells, pagers, home, etc.) to the Disaster Preparedness Plan.

**South Carolina Department of Social Services  
Adult Protective Services Policy and Procedure Manual**

**APS Program Policy– Disaster & Emergency Preparedness**

**160 RESOURCES**

Each county office will develop and maintain a list of resources readily available to assist in meeting client needs in preparation for or after severe weather or natural or other disaster. Resources should include the following:

A. Access to local area council/agency on aging

1. Coordinate services and resources which will be available for APS clients during times of disaster
2. Update service information and contacts periodically to ensure accuracy and availability

B. Memorandum of Understanding

1. The MOU should be developed with local community representatives to clarify roles and responsibilities of participating agencies
2. The MOU should address evacuation routes and the destination points of the routes.

**170 STATE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT TEAM**

The county staff should be familiar with the State Emergency Management Team. The county staff should review the information from the State Management Team periodically to ensure accuracy and familiarity with the county's role and responsibilities during a state of emergency.

**180 SAFFIR-SIMPSON HURRICANE SCALE  
RATING DESCRIPTION**

**Winds 74 to 95 miles per hour (mph) CATEGORY 1**

Minimal structural damage  
Manufactured housing at risk  
Power lines, signs and tree branches blown down

**Winds 96 to 110 mph CATEGORY 2**

Moderate structural damage to walls, roofs, and windows  
Manufactured housing at greater risk  
Large signs and tree branches blown down  
Storm surge 6 to 8 feet

**Winds 111 to 130 mph CATEGORY 3\***

Extensive structural damage to walls, roofs and windows  
Trees blown down  
Storm surge 9 to 12 feet

**Winds 131 to 155 mph CATEGORY 4\***

Extreme damage to structure and roofs  
Trees uprooted  
Storm surge 13 to 18 feet

**Winds in excess of 155 mph CATEGORY 5\***

Catastrophic damage  
Structures destroyed

**South Carolina Department of Social Services  
Adult Protective Services Policy and Procedure Manual**

**APS Program Policy– Disaster & Emergency Preparedness**

Storm surge 18 feet or higher

NOTE: Flying debris or projectiles such as signs, trees, glass, roof, shingles, lawn furniture and toys can cause severe property damage as well as major injuries or even death.

**\*Category 3 or higher is defined as a “Major Hurricane.”**

**181 FUJITA-PEARSON TORNADO SCALE**

**F0 – Gale Tornado (40-72 mph)**

Light damage, some damage to chimneys; branches broken off trees; shallow-rooted trees pushed over; sign boards damaged.

**F1 - Moderate Tornado (73-112 mph)**

Moderate damage; The lower limit is the beginning of Hurricane wind speed; peels surface off roofs; mobile homes pushed off foundations or overturned; moving autos pushed off the road; attached garages may be destroyed.

**F2 – Significant Tornado (113-157)**

Considerable damage; entire roofs torn from frame houses; mobile homes demolished; boxcars pushed over; large trees snapped or uprooted; light-object missiles generated.

**F3 – Severe Tornado (158 – 206)**

Severe damage; walls torn from well-constructed houses; trains overturned; most trees in forests uprooted; heavy cars lifted off ground and thrown.

**F4 – Devastating Tornado (207 – 260)**

Well-constructed houses leveled; structures with weak foundations blown off some distance; cars thrown and large missiles generated.

**F5 – Incredible Tornado (261-318)**

Strong frame houses lifted off foundations and carried considerable distances to disintegrate; automobile-sized missiles fly through the air 100 yards or more; trees debarked; steel reinforced concrete structures badly damaged.

**Referenced Documents:**

SCDSS APS Emergency Preparedness- APS Staff, Offices and Equipment (2017)

DHEC’s Special Needs Shelter brochure